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| **Stage Fright**  Stage fright is often identified as people's number one fear. People are more afraid of standing and speaking in public than spiders, snakes, death, and even tax increases.  Yet, there are certainly steps you can take to conquer your stage fright. On this page, I have listed some help for you. You can quickly find any given topic on this page by using this index:  **Stage Fright Defined**  Stage fright is a form of stress. It's your body's response to pressure. Everyone reacts to stress differently, so symptoms of stage fright vary from person to person. However, these physical symptoms are the most common:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | "Butterflies" in the stomach | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Trembling knees | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Quaking voice | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Dry mouth | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Shortness of breath | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Sweaty palms | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Forgetfulness | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Loss of concentration |   When you are suffering from stage fright, there are a number of tell-tale signs the audience can easily see:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Pacing back and forth | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Quaking voice | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Rocking in place | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Shuffling papers or notes | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Lack of eye contact with the audience | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Blank, emotionless facial expression |   There are also a few psychological factors that will intensify stage fright.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | First, you may expect too much from yourself. You may believe that you must perform a perfect speech every time you stand up. You've heard other speakers who have inspired you and believe you should do the same. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Second, you may expect too much from other people. You expect the audience to give feedback as you speak. However, if the audience does not laugh at a story or tell you afterward that it was a great speech, then you can grow to think you cannot speak effectively. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Third, you may expect too much gloom and doom. You start out your speech preparation by believing you will fail. The attitude often is "I don't want to speak, but I have to face it, so I might as well get it over with." This is the same attitude you would have toward fighting a dragon! |   Stage fright, then, is YOUR response to a situation, it is not something that someone else is doing to you. If it is an internal response, then you should be able to do things to control it.  **Stage Fright Cured**  If you can remember these thoughts, it may help you control your stage fright:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Stage fright is controllable. You create the stress in yourself, so you can control the stress with a few positive steps. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | All speaking you do outside your home is "public speaking." The size of the audience may change, but if you simply walk down to the local mall and ask a clerk for the price of some item, you have spoken in public! | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Stage fright is normal. Every great speaker has suffered from this stress. In fact, many speakers insist that a little stress while you are addressing an audience is beneficial! |   However, you will want to reduce your stage fright to a controllable level, so here are a few tips that will help:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Probably the single best way to control stage fright is to prepare your speech well. The better you prepare your speech, the more comfortable you will be on stage. Study your subject until you know it well, then prepare a speech that includes information you are familiar with. The better you prepare, the less you will worry and create the stress of stage fright. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Remember, you are the expert. The audience is there to listen to you. They want to gain something from your speech. If you will concentrate on your audience's needs, you will soon forget your own. Focus on what you are saying -- focus on your message. Don't worry about those butterflies playing football in your stomach! | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Arrive at the speaking site early. Look around the auditorium, walk onto the stage, walk through the audience's area. If you can arrive before most of the audience, you will be able to sit quietly in the audience area for a few minutes and relax. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | If you rely on some sort of device during your speech (such as a projector), be sure to plug it in and test it early. Always have a backup plan in case your device does not work. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Dress appropriately for the audience, but be comfortable. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | If you can enter the stage from the back of the room, do so. After the moderator has introduced you, walk from the back of the room. Take a few deep breaths as you approach the stage. Look around and find people you know. Smile. These activities will help you calm down and control your stress. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | While speaking, if you get a dry throat, take a sip of water. If you feel breathless, take a few deep breaths. If you need a short break, pause to collect your thoughts. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Don't be afraid to move around on the stage. Walk from behind the lectern and move freely. Use your hands in gestures. As you move about, you will begin to relax. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | One thing that we all fear is forgetting our speech. You may get into the middle of your speech, then suddenly "blank out." If so, pause, take a deep breath, then say, "Perhaps I didn't make that last point very clear. Here's what I meant. . .." Go back to your last point and repeat it. This will normally "unlock" your memory and permit you to move on. | | http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2748/images/bullet01.gif | Finally, volunteer to speak in public every chance you get! It seems trite, but practice does make perfect. If you will speak frequently in public, you will soon learn to control your stage fright. | |